

**Minutes of the Seven Corners
Opportunity Area C Special Working Group**
January 20, 2015
Mason District Governmental Center

Meeting called to order at 7:00 PM

Attendance

Special Working Group (SWG): Chairman Marty Faga, George Fitchko, Bill Lecos, Catriona McCormack, Marty Machowsky, Margaret van Voast, Carol Martone, and Duane Morse

Staff: Elizabeth Hagg (OCR), JoAnne Fiebe (OCR), Hyojung Garland (OCR), Bernard Suchicital (DPZ), Kris Morley-Nikfar (DOT), Kimberly Rybold (DPZ), Marianne Gardner (DPZ), and Aaron Frank from the Office of Supervisor Penny Gross

Review and Approval of Minutes

Marty Faga asked if there were any corrections to the Minutes of the January 7, 2015, SWG meeting. George Fitchko moved to approve the Minutes as written, which was seconded by Duane Morse. The Minutes were approved unanimously.

Distribute and Discuss Consolidated Concept Plan, Revised Quantification Chart and Trip Generation Chart

JoAnne Fiebe began by explaining that most items presented this evening were posted on the Seven Corners study webpage on Friday, January 16, 2015, as requested. JoAnne presented the revised concept for Opportunity Area C to the group including plan quantifications. She incorporated input from the previous meeting to create a new concept that unites many of the ideas discussed at the Open House and at the previous meeting. Some of these ideas include shifting the retail from the "spine road" to the other main entrance at Leesburg Pike and adjacent new local street. She incorporated an entertainment use to serve as an anchor with the retail and to create a synergy of uses designed to establish a vibrant pedestrian environment. Two parks/gathering spaces were placed at either end of the site. Finally, she located senior housing on the parcel between Juniper Lane and Patrick Henry Drive; a use which has less of an impact on traffic and schools.

JoAnne described the amount of each land use on the site. She noted that residential use was located on the upper stories (2-6) of all three buildings along Leesburg Pike. Building heights are shown as six stories along Leesburg Pike tapering to five stories along the new parallel road on the site. The townhomes would be a maximum of three stories and would serve as a buffer to the existing residential neighborhoods.

Marty Machowsky asked how the plan will accommodate vehicles that currently travel west on the service road from Juniper Lane. The concern is that by limiting movements on Juniper Lane, there will be an increase of traffic on Patrick Henry Drive. Kris Morley-Nikfar explained that all of those possibilities will be evaluated during the future traffic study planned for in the area of Juniper Lane and Patrick Henry Drive. Marty Machowsky also stated that this new concept is approximately 84% residential which is higher than what the charrette teams discussed and is inconsistent with the community's desires for less residential. JoAnne explained that the group could reduce the amount of residential use by eliminating entire floors from the top of one or more of the buildings along Leesburg Pike. She said they could also

propose more office by adding a story; however, retail is already shown on the ground-floor where it is likely to be viable, so it is difficult to envision additional retail on this site.

Marty Machowsky stated that the Comprehensive Plan must hold Patrick Henry Drive and Juniper Lane harmless from any new development.

Duane Morse said that he likes this design. It achieves a lot of what the SWG is looking for. The new design creates an interesting place to walk or drive to and the entertainment use would add an important amenity for the community.

Catriona McCormack asked about the topography along the rear of the site and how that might affect views from the neighborhoods. JoAnne offered to bring views of the proposed concept with accurate topography to the next SWG meeting.

The SWG discussed the proposed buffer language in the draft Comprehensive Plan and suggested that the language should be strengthened to require a higher quality buffer.

JoAnne then showed how the Opportunity Area C concept fits into the overall master plan concept for Seven Corners. She believes that the concept fits well and provides a good transition from the density at the future town center (Opportunity Area B) and the existing neighborhoods. Block sizes in Opportunity Area C along Leesburg Pike are shown at 475 feet, which are consistent with proposed blocks across the street in Area B.

Hyojung Garland presented a series of images from projects in the region with similar densities and building heights to the SWG draft concept to show how the character of Opportunity Area C could look if redeveloped in keeping with the draft SWG concept plan.

Kris Morley-Nikfar presented trip generation rates from the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE). He distributed a chart comparing ITE trip generation rates for the existing uses, permitted by-right uses, and the proposed uses for the site. He noted that the number of trips varies widely based on specific types of uses. For example, department stores generate fewer trips than discount superstores. He said the Virginia Department of Transportation views the weekday P.M. peak hour trips as most significant because this is the highest congestion period for the Seven Corners area. He showed that the SWG draft concept does add some peak-hour trips as compared to the existing uses, but that the increase is not dramatic and is less than what could be generated by uses currently allowed by zoning on the site. He noted that the number of trips does not take into account trip reductions based on proximity and synergy of uses or trips eliminated as a result of people walking, biking, or taking transit. Kris also noted that a movie theatre use is a very high trip generator, which is something to consider when looking for ways to reduce trips.

Economic Feasibility Findings

Elizabeth Hagg presented the findings of the economic feasibility report prepared by Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL) of the SWG's draft concept plan. She first explained that this was a very high level look at the economics of the proposal and was done without the benefit of significant proprietary financial information such as leases, etc. . She shared the report's assumptions and how JLL interpreted the plan concept. The report's conclusions stated that the concept is close to providing a reasonable return on investment but that it would require a shift in some of the land uses such as a small increase in townhouse units to make the concept economically viable. Marty Faga reminded the group that the purpose of this report was to see if the SWG concept is "in the ball-park" of economic feasibility. Bill Lecos agreed with Marty Faga saying that it validates that the concept is in the realm of reality. Mark Hayes pointed out that JLL is the same expert as the one working on the

southeast quadrant site in Bailey's.

Draft Plan Language Pertaining to Opportunity Area C

Bernard Suchicital gave a PPT presentation that highlighted key aspects of the Seven Corners draft Comprehensive Plan and the proposed changes to the text and graphics pertaining to Opportunity Area C. Bernard reviewed the draft Plan's objectives, overall concept, Plan maps, and parts of the text.

Marty Machowsky suggested that after looking at the entire vision for Seven Corners it would be easy to reduce some proposed residential square footage from Opportunity Area C without altering the character of the area. Catriona stated that what many people requested was for the Supervisor to look at the entire Seven Corners Study Area, not just Area C. Bill Lecos replied that the group's task is Opportunity Area C. He added this area is important because it is likely to come in first and thus will set the tone for the redevelopment of the entire Seven Corners area.

George Fitchko asked if the SWG wants to reduce the amount of residential in the Area C Plan since the big issue is residential density? Catriona said that some residential could be replaced with specialty office since the developer suggested that there is a market for medical office. Bill Lecos suggested that the group could add language that would permit the developer to swap office for residential, but not the other way around.

Community Q & A

Marty Faga asked the SWG to hear any questions or comments from the community.

John Ikel of the Ravenwood Park Civic Association said that there is much to like in terms of mixed-use ideas. He asked the SWG to control the amount of residential. He also made a few editorial comments about the draft Comprehensive Plan which he will email to staff.

Ernie Wells thinks that a vision that increases land value by 10% is sufficient. He wouldn't change the proposed numbers to reflect the suggestions in the JLL report. He also suggested a transportation phasing requirement before any rezoning application.

Carol Turner said that she is pleased with the work. She asked if raising the value of the senior housing in the plan would close the feasibility gap?

Mark Hayes submitted comments directly to Marty Faga including suggested amendments to the follow-on motions (FOMs) and Plan language. Marty said that Aaron distributed them to the SWG in advance of the meeting. Mark recommended that the language in the transportation FOM should be clarified to cover all of Opportunity Area C, as well as surrounding streets such as Castle Place, and should include neighborhood engagement. Kris Morley-Nikfar concurred that the study would include neighborhood input. Mark thanked staff for making meeting materials available in advance of the meeting, per his previous suggestion.

Marty Faga said that we should focus on the two problem streets: Patrick Henry Drive and Juniper Lane, in part to avoid diluting the effort. He said that he had initially agreed with Mark but, after conversation with Kris, had changed to the "let's focus" view.

Clyde Miller asked the SWG to think about 1,200 people living on the Sears site. He said that building heights should be limited to three stories on the west side and that screening and barriers are important. He felt stronger language is needed and he will send suggested Plan language to staff. He also recommended that the SWG put the concept plan away and deal solely with the Plan language because that describes what the vision is for the site..

John Birch from Bel Air said that restricting access on Juniper increases congestion on Leesburg Pike and at the intersection of Leesburg Pike and Patrick Henry Drive.

Debbie Smith is dismayed that the group is so off-balanced with the proposed land uses. She thought that too much residential development is being proposed. She also made several suggested edits to the Plan language.

Don Smith is alarmed by the trip generation rates doubling and dismayed that the group is trying to bid against themselves. Marty Faga responded that no one has ever said we have to hit a specific number or create a plan that pleases the developer.

Scott Adams, representing the developer, Foulger-Pratt, explained that they are heartened by some of the discussion and reminded the group that the JLL report is just a data point and is a high-level analysis. He said that the use mix is in the ball-park and that they are optimistic that the group is getting closer to something that works for everyone. He would like to see tweaking with the numbers and would like more floor-area-ratio (FAR), but recognizes where the community is coming from. The developer will send staff some specific comments.

Sandy Evans, Mason District School Board representative, asked the SWG to recognize the need for more school seats in the area. Area schools are overcapacity or projected to be overcapacity. The school board has requested the Willston site back. Bill Lecos asked Ms. Evans if there is anything in the FCPS Capital Improvement Plan for improvements at Glen Forest and Sleepy Hollow Elementary schools. She responded that only temporary buildings are being added to these schools but that a building addition is proposed for Stuart High School.

Draft Plan Language Comments and Discussion

Marty Faga explained that the group needs to be prepared for the last meeting. He then asked each SWG their thoughts on the current density and use mix proposal.

Catriona said that the group has made progress but that the proposed plan is high on residential. She said that she is okay with the overall 685,000 square feet of density but suggested reducing multi-family by 100 dwelling units and adding more office space.

Bill Lecos believes the group is at the right numbers but should allow flexibility to convert residential to office if the market demands it. He is less comfortable with the elderly housing and would prefer more market rate independent living housing.

Carol Martone said that traffic is her biggest concern.

George Fitchko stated that under the by-right retail-only scenario, traffic would be high. In general, the proposal is a good mix, but could perhaps bump up the retail a little and reduce multi-family housing by 50 units.

Marty Machowsky said he is less concerned with the overall level of density at 685,000 square feet and more concerned with the mix of uses. He suggested reducing senior housing and multi-family housing each by 50,000 square feet, while increasing office and retail use.

Duane Morse likes what is on the ground and believes that the draft Comprehensive Plan should describe in greater detail what the community wants. The text should start with the desire for a good mix of uses. It is hard for him to see how more retail could be added to the site given that it needs to be on the ground-floor and have visibility. He also does not want to see substantially more office use since that takes away from the vibrancy the group is trying to achieve, particularly on nights and weekends. He explained that the residential is what pays for all of the other amenities on the site including retail and office. He requested that the Plan text be modified to specifically reflect 'market-rate' senior housing.

Margaret van Voast thinks that Area B will set the tone for the rest of Seven Corners. She suggested increasing the townhomes by 10 or 20 units and reducing multi-family by 40 units. She requested more emphasis on buffer language in the draft Plan. She is expecting to see major changes in the entertainment industry in the next few years which may affect the ability for the site to attract such a tenant. She also suggested reuniting the site between Juniper Lane and Patrick Henry Drive with the rest of Opportunity Area C because it is a disadvantage to have it separated. Retail could then be added to it but only with this increased access.

Mark Hayes inquired about the SWG's position regarding the affordable housing policy for Opportunity Area C. Bill Lecos said that because the overall area already has a significant amount of affordable housing, he is a strong proponent of only 12% affordable housing (rather than the 15% in the current draft Plan) for Opportunity Area C. Others agreed.

Marty Faga recapped the comments from the SWG members. He explained that some members were okay with the densities and mix that was suggested and that some members wanted to see residential reduced by 50 – 100 units. He reminded everyone that one of his goals was to create a plan that can actually work for the developer as well as the community.

Scott Adams remarked that by reducing residential it will take the developer out of the ball-park to move forward with redevelopment and that if that is what the SWG ultimately wants to recommend that it might be better to leave the Comprehensive Plan for Opportunity Area C as is. Bill Lecos said that he is concerned with that approach because the community could end up getting a piece-meal development proposal and lose the elements that are most important to the community. It would also be difficult to achieve the design goals the community has articulated. Marty Machowsky commented that the group has been given a false choice to have to decide now what will happen to Opportunity Area C in the future.

Marty Faga explained that the next step will be to meet with staff to review edits to the text. Other suggested edits to the Plan text from the SWG or from the community should be sent to JoAnne Fiebe.

Marty Machowsky asked about the open meeting rules and if there could be a Google group set up to allow the SWG and the community to interact between now and the final meeting. Aaron Frank said he will look into the suggestion to understand if it is possible, both legally and technically.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 pm

Marty Faga
Special Working Group Chairman

Date